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ABSTRACT

This document is a collection of articles on various subjects related to open education. "Summer Institute as a Prototype," a description of the forerunner of the Workshop Center for Open Education, attemps to convey expectations about the evolution of the workshop process as it develops within the center. "Notes on the Continuum of Change" is taken from an advisor's report on work in progress at P.S. 75, where there are 14 classes in the Open Corridor program. "More on Reading Tests" presents the transcript of a taped interview in which third-grade teachers give their views on reading tests. The last section is devoted to book reviews. (JA)

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Notes from Workshop Center for Open Education

October 1973

"Schools which are established from above and by force are not a shepherd for the flock but a flock for the shepherd."

Leo Tolstoy

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THIS ISSUE: SUMMER INSTITUTE AS A WORKSHOP PROTOTYPE/ NOTES ON THE CONTINUUM OF CHANGE/ MORE ON READING TESTS/ REVIEWS/ WINTER WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

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About this publication

Letter from the director

The third issue of *Notes* appears under the auspices of the Workshop Center for Open Education. It represents a new chapter in work started five years ago, when we accepted a commitment to search for a better match between school organization and children's learning.

From the start, this work involved us in re-examining the teacher's role in general and teachers' training in particular. Being critical of the schools as they were organized, we had to reject student teacher practice in such schools as perpetuating past failures. But for student teacher practice to change, not only did school organization have to change, *teachers* had to become the active agents of such change. When as a result of discomfort with old ways, teachers began actively reaching out for change -- the element that distinguishes one teacher from another -- it destroyed forever the idea of the teacher as interchangeable unit.

The traditional school, marked by rigid organization, a prescribed syllabus, and a sterile environment, encouraged passivity and discouraged development of resources. The self-contained classrooms had isolated teachers, and teachers neither trusted, nor had the skills for, interaction. Even when they wanted to change they were grade-oriented, they used whole-class control, they used homogeneous grouping. We felt at the time that to change in the midst of a system, where much remains unchanged, would require the expenditure of great effort, confidence in one's own analysis of mismatch and in one's own decisions. It would require a willingness to make connections with other teachers working in isolation, and a respect for and interest in their solutions. It would call for an investment in the development of new resources and new potentialities in all the elements of human relatedness. It would need, clearly, all of the focus of one's own

determination -- what we have come to call voluntarism. Our work developed out of this context.

Our support for teachers has been analogous to the kind of support we hoped teachers would give children. We have tried to meet the questing teacher's search for her, or his, own active intelligence. We have tried to meet teachers at the point of their focus and inquiry, maximizing their own resources and strengths, accepting differences, offering extensions as they could be used. Our commitment to support the changes and continuity of teacher development has been carried out through workshops, through graduate and undergraduate offerings, with the main emphasis on support within the context of changes in the schools, within the context of the advisor and the Open Corridors.

Up to now we have worked only in the schools. From the close work with advisor-supported Open Corridors, we have learned and continue to learn about the implications of change and about what is needed next. But through the Workshop Center we can now help the many teachers who have begun to change classrooms on their own -- without the support of the open corridor organization or an advisor.

After two months of staff formation and preparation to which City College, advisors, teachers, parents, and students have all contributed, the Center is ready for use. Preparation involved us in decisions very similar to those made by an open education teacher changing a traditional classroom and for similar reasons. We wanted to provide for the diversity of teachers' interests, needs and stages of development. We wanted to provide for browsing, for free exploration, for talk, for direct demonstration. We wanted to change the old drab physics labs on the ground floor of Shepard Hall into an environment that would refresh, stimulate, encourage, and reinforce. We wanted the teachers to begin to shape their own environment in a dimension supportive of their own growth.

Now that the Center is ready to begin, we hope the teacher will control the dimension and select his or her own focus. We hope, too,

that those using the Center will find all that they are looking for and that as we and they assess and reassess what we have and have not provided, they will contribute or make their own adaptations and additions.

The information exchange we initiated with *Notes* can now continue as the core of the dissemination services of the Workshop Center. In future issues of *Notes* we will continue to report developments in the Open Corridors, but the Center will also be a source of materials. In this issue of *Notes* we are able -- even before the Center itself can share its experience -- to offer some serious discussion of what can be expected from adult learning in a free situation, as in the Summer Institute. We also continue our discussion of reading and our broader exploration of ideas and practice.

Lillian Weber

Summer institute as a prototype

The forerunner of the Workshop Center for Open Education was the Summer Institute that has been held at City College for the last two years. Much of the thought that has gone into conceptualizing the Workshop Center came out of this experience. The material that follows -- a general description, some student comments, and a brief critical assessment of growth over the two year period -- comes as close as we can get at this point to conveying what we expect the workshop process to be as it evolves within the Center, how we expect it will be used and in what ways it will be useful. The first part is excerpted from a memo by Miriam Dorn, associate professor of elementary education; the second part is excerpted from questionnaires students filled out; and the last part is excerpted from memos by Lillian Weber.

I

Our main goal for the Institute was to put the participants in touch with their own learning; to have them investigate and explore materials and select an area or areas in which they would do a serious and sustained piece of work. This kind of action parallels the open classroom in many ways: There are materials available, choice is exercised, and a certain student-student and student-teacher relationship evolves. Our students would begin, then extend their learning and it is hoped, through involvement become conscious of how the learning process, under these conditions, takes place for *them*. It was further hoped that through becoming conscious of their own learning in this way, they would gain greater insight into children's learning. If they have never experienced sustained learning this way (and most have not), it is probably

impossible to understand, plan for, and believe in this kind of learning for children. Students were also informed about what goals they were not to pursue; they were not to stockpile materials for use with children in the fall, they were not to accumulate art objects, they were not to try to approach the materials as they thought a child might. The work was to be adults' work, on an adult level. When it all came together for them on an adult level -- analogies could be drawn with children's learning. We wanted to keep the focus on their own exploration as clear as possible. Our previous year's experience had taught us that such a focus was the unique feature of such an Institute.

Most of the students genuinely sought to explore and to become involved. The initial task was, however, incredibly difficult for many, and understandably so. They found themselves out of the kind of learning situation in which they had spent most of their lives. They were not assigned to a task, e.g., learn this law of physics; they were not presented with assigned readings; they were not instructed on what they were to "cover." The had to make a choice, ask themselves a question related to materials, and progress in an open way to extend their own understanding. The difficulties in such actions are innumerable for people trained otherwise. First of all there is great fear of exposing the very elementary level of their understanding. There is also an inability to question -- an atrophy which occurs in the "context of a course." And there is the old fear of "not meeting expectations." These anxieties led initially to a variety of defenses, among the most common of which was doing work which you are good at without branching out (many students took refuge in art activities and the first few days yielded a proliferation of tissue-paper-covered bottles); using tri-wall to make bookcases and dividers for use in the classroom, insisting that this was an important thing to do, more important than exploring; and wandering around with pad and pencil making lists of books and materials.

After considerable anxiety and random exploration for the first few days, breakthroughs became evident. One student spent at least

four hours trying to wire a bell so that it would ring. She finally got it to do so, and was ecstatic. She shared her exploration with surrounding participants. Her attitude was, "I'm amazed. I knew all the applicable laws of physics and I didn't have a clue as to how the damn thing really worked. I'm terribly excited because I see how important this kind of thing is for understanding. I really see the difference between verbal, rote understanding and genuine 'how it works' understanding."

One morning, Jim Rose (one of the Institute faculty) took a group out to the vacant lot behind the building. The students returned with a wealth of "stuff": plant life, rocks, bottles, mud. One woman became very involved in a study of temperature variation. She reported, "I am very interested in what I am doing, but I am also interested in how I got to do it. Jim Rose didn't say much but he *conveyed* the distinct impression that we were expected to pick up on something and the work was to be serious. When he suggested that we find out how many degrees of variation there were inside and outside a bottle, I got busy and did it. Each step I took got me more involved." Here was a combination of stimulus, suggestions from an instructor, and willingness of a student to take the first steps. The student summed up: "I have learned something about my role as teacher. I thought I ran an open classroom, but I realize I never knew what to expect, and so I didn't really expect much."

More and more students began to take first steps and found themselves involved in extended projects. They began to record their findings and share them through wall displays, through discussion, and in advisory sessions. There were students who had great difficulty in getting away from art work with which they felt secure. Advisors spoke to them when it was felt they needed some prodding, and they all confessed to a great fear of the other areas, especially science. Eight people were steered to Bill Betts (another faculty member) who sat down with battery, wires, and bulbs. Most of the eight became "hooked" and did considerable work in the area, and

all felt positive about being helped to relate to an area which they had avoided.

The first week and a half thus had some students exploring by going from activity to activity, some working in pairs or groups on a problem in a sustained way, some working individually for long periods of time, and a few avoiding involvement. Some participants began to offer "sessions" to other students. One young woman started to teach macrame, and a large number of participants joined her on different days for part of the day. Another woman offered Spanish dancing; a young man led the effort in setting up a darkroom and a photo lab. Participants offered demonstrations on Japanese cooking and sessions of choral singing. Using the instruments led to "jam sessions" for part of many afternoons. Simultaneously, instructors offered sessions on organization, planning, recording, developmental theory, open classroom rationale and applications. Brief demonstrations were given on the use of art materials and high-powered tools. Mrs. Sally Kerlin from the Wave Hill Center for Environmental Education conducted some sessions on water ecology that were woven right into the ongoing activity in the classroom and that provided the stimulus for many beginning points. There were films offered for those who wanted to see them either because the topic interested them or as a break from other activities. Mr. Frank Knight came from the Botanical Gardens and took groups out to study the flora around the college. Mr. Robert Arbib, director of *American Birds*, National Audubon Society, spoke about birds in the area. Students took trips around Harlem, visited the American Indian museum, the Museo del Barrio, and explored local landmarks. Staff members of the Museo and of the Weeksville Project in Bedford-Stuyvesant gave presentations.

When the faculty got together for a mid-point look at the way the Institute was going, one of the big problems seemed to be the rather poor attitude students had towards the materials and the environment in which they were working. In spite of an emphasis on cleaning-up at the orientation session, faculty members were often left at the end of the day with a vast amount of reorganizing. The faculty

room used by participants for coffee, soda, etc., was a mess. It seemed that the students had gained little feeling for organization, for care of materials, for an esthetic and reasonably "clean" environment. They seemed unaware of any forethought for organization. The faculty, however, had planned that at midway when the consequences of uninvolvement would be plain, students should take over, for planning and maintaining a well-organized and inviting environment is a "must" for open classroom teachers and reflects more than housekeeping competence. Therefore, students who used a certain space had to plan for its use, inventory and put out the material, and improve its esthetics. The change in the Institute's appearance after a morning of work was staggering. The change in student attitude was even more so. In having to plan and organize, students began to make connections, to understand what was there, and to comprehend in a more unified way. It was as if they found out not only where things belonged, but where *they* belonged.

The following and final week and a half reflected the feeling of confidence that this day generated, but it also reflected natural growth over a period of time. Students became more conscious of their own learning, aware of how they learned from others, aware of extensions, and aware of the need for time to learn anything. They passed the crisis period of needing the direct "lesson" and the immediate answer. This is a most crucial breakthrough -- to become conscious of one's ability to learn in this way, and to become aware of many paths such learning can take. One must experience oneself that learning can take place this way in order to support this way of learning for children. One must learn to recognize beginning points and practice the art of seeing possibilities for extensions.

At the end of the three weeks advisors and students developed more formal criteria for evaluating progress by discussing the aims of the program and asking each student to judge how far they had come in meeting these objectives. Most students felt that they rated very high on "involvement in their own learning."

The faculty felt that with some exceptions the students were right. There were, of course, some students who had kept busy but had remained aloof from really getting into anything that would create an intellectual disequilibrium. But even in these cases the students were aware that they had missed something and were thus aware of a dimension to learning that was important.

II

Did you, at the workshop, learn anything new about your own learning or the learning of children?

Principal: I realized how some children need the satisfaction of working on a project in which they're deeply involved, even if it temporarily interferes with what a teacher may consider well-rounded activities and learning.

I realized (or remembered) that some children will ask another child for assistance if the climate of the class is open to this; if not, he will ask no one, rather than approach the teacher.

Teacher: Surprisingly enough, I found that learning can be exciting, worthwhile, stimulating, and enjoyable. I actually found myself question things I had previously taken for granted. This constant questioning opened many new areas of study. I found myself constantly thinking about the possibilities of all the materials I used. This experience can be applied directly to children for they too have these feelings about learning.

Parent: Through self-exploration I learned that the self-pressures are tremendous and that what is learned cannot always be measured immediately or even applied. I think kids too feel these initial pressures and perhaps need our guidance and help in pursuing a definite path of discovery. The idea of individuality really cam across to me. How each child must be brought along a very definite and well planned route.

Teacher: It takes a long time to do something well, but the quality of learning that

results is terrific. I will not forget. The teacher has the crucial role to guide; ask the right questions at the right time, give or not give answers at the right time to facilitate learning. There's a tremendous satisfaction and pride from doing something well.

Teacher: How interest (my own) plays such an important part in learning; the need for guidance in the way of suggestions, leading questions, answers, sometimes, and genuine interest on the part of the teacher in my work.

Teacher: Yes, I found out that I always found myself going back to what I had started. For example, for about a week, I went back religiously to the electricity table (usually in the morning) until I had satisfied my curiosity which culminated in making a game.

III

Much of what was learned over the first three-week period two summers ago resulted from interchange and collaborative work. Working together and discussing the work resulted in new understandings of our organizational problems, the function of display, the significance of social interaction, how to sustain a child's interest. Participants in the Institute began to understand what the teacher learned from observation and how this affected her role.

The first questions were, "How do you keep things going?", "How do you sustain a child in his work?", "How do you *know* if a child has learned anything?", "How do you know *what* he has learned?" Such questions could not be answered theoretically. We could, as we did, describe our experiences, but our experiences were unconvincing. The repetition of the questions, and the blank stares we got as the answers were allowed to slip by unreceived even though heard, was evidence that answers had to come another way. We urged the students to start working, put aside questions, at least for a time. The seminar periods would give them a regular opportunity to examine residual questions after the first week of work.

The first answers were not to these first questions. With some amazement, students watched as workshop leaders daily reconstituted the organization of the workshop and changed and extended their provision of material. The participants, on the other hand, in their own classrooms had tended to expect the organization to hold for long blocks of time.

In the first exchange of experience there had been much loud blaming of the children for poor organization and poor care of materials; now these teachers were the *children* and they saw their own poor use of materials. After the first few days they were asked to assume responsibilities with the leaders. They were asked to keep the workshop ready for use; only daily and thoughtful care could keep it so. They learned the hard and daily work necessary by both leader or teacher *and* participants for the creation and maintenance of a learning environment.

Endless changes were made and discussed. Another question arose from the accumulation of products. What did one do with one's work and the work of others? The idea of display was reconsidered; it obviously had functions previously unnoticed. The quick posting on the wall, signifying the end of a piece of work with no relationship to its effect on others or to continuing work, was reconsidered. Also reconsidered was the "pretty" display -- usually a teacher's product meant to inform or impress parents. In its place we posed a new obligation -- the social obligation to share and communicate; and this motivated a different display, which shared the process: the development of what had been done.

In the process of such serious organization of work, there came another gain - again raised to clear consciousness through the process of reflective interchange that was built into everything that happened at the Institute. It became clear that the organization for the sharing of work with classmates, after the actual work was done, could be, and was for more and more participants, a time of reconsideration, a time when the unordered intuitive flow of work could be

reordered, reconsidered, and reflected upon. Often a flow of new ideas was stimulated by some small, previously unnoticed point, a remark, say, by an interested classmate. Or an obvious discrepancy and illogic would clear as the work was put in order. Thus was established the role of such organizing for display in fostering cognitive order, and in helping sustain and prolong involvement in work.

Last summer we moved students to the same perceptions, and then some. Besides seeing how interest is sustained, how we know what is learned, and the importance of classroom organization and display, participants in the second Summer Institute perceived the importance of differences between learners, differences in the time it takes to begin to settle down to work, differences in the time it takes to come to terms with anxiety, differences in the approach to problems.

As students experienced how long it took them to carry out their efforts, they perceived that time for learning is enormously important. They saw the importance of exploration before learning, even when such exploration seemed desultory; and they came to see the importance of both interchange with others and observation of their work. Overwhelmingly, students felt they had gotten some perception of how much time it took to really do a thing well, how much time it took to really develop a point and to see an investigation through. Over and over again, students were able to see how important it was for them that the team leader took a serious approach to their work, and that it was this seriousness of approach to small starting points that resulted in what they finally perceived as a high standard of work.

We organized the 1972 Institute in ways that were somewhat different from those of the previous summer. I think it sharpened our focus. No longer differentiating between participants who worked with young children and those who worked with older ones, the organization of the 1972 Institute concentrated on thinking of all of the space, resources, and personnel as a common pool that could be used by any of the participants

whenever it was appropriate to the problem they were investigating. Students were divided into five advisory groups, each one including one of the five full-time Institute faculty. (In 1971 we had separated into large seminars.) In this way, each student could have a relationship with a staff member whose point of reference was the entire experience of the seminar as it was affecting that participant. The advisory group met as a body and had additional access to the advisory leader in personal conferences. No leader was assigned to a specific area.

For the students, the Institute meant experiencing their own adult learning. Team leaders set up juxtapositions of materials that might be interesting and challenging, that might raise this or that question for this or that student, and students were asked to look at the environment we had set up (which by the second week was enlarged to include a vast amount of material from the vacant lot behind City College) and to question it, to forget about their own classrooms and to relate as adults to what was in front of them, questioning where previously they might have been accepting. We asked them not to get involved immediately in either making something or using something already familiar to them. Team leaders supported them in discussing any question brought up in the course of their effort, suggesting resources needed for their exploration. We assured students that their anxiety over the relevance of this kind of investigation to their work with children would lift as they worked with each other and as they experienced the staff working with them.

The questions students raised were discussed in the advisory and the seminar sessions that developed from the advisories. But we felt that it was essential that they get to work and begin to feel the problems of their own learning and begin to reflect on just what these problems were and what the role of the team leader and of resource material had been for them in their investigations. Many of them were terribly anxious about taking a risk on the unknown and we all felt very strongly that unless it was clear to them that they themselves could learn, their confidence in children's learning would be very weak.

In contrast to the separate consideration of art in 1971, we decided that art activities would be related to the investigation. We ruled out development of skills that, after all, are whole studies in themselves. As a result, we vetoed the making of furniture for the classroom, which could have taken the entire three weeks without any breakthrough to an inquiry approach. Yet there was a great deal of the making-of-things needed for investigation. In the same way, the need for some brief "how to" sessions did emerge, but as a result of some of the investigations. Thus, investigating the bricks and earth of the vacant lot brought questions about clay, the search for a claybank, and some "how to" demonstrations on the use of clay. Exploring positive and negative aspects of some sand holes, plaster of Paris casting was needed and also "how to" demonstrations on the use of plaster of Paris. This then developed into printing.

What evolved in this way were investigative periods, very short 10-20-minute demonstrations, advisories, brief seminars (on recording, rationale, planning), and then options that were partly offerings by one of the participants to the others. Our offerings were music and movement and some guided trips to resources in Harlem related to the Black or Hispanic communities. Participants offered small sessions in cooking, photography, macrame, and music.

In 1971, we required a project from Institute participants. We discarded that requirement in 1972, but stressed serious work at all times. The result was that there were at least as many serious and sustained projects developed as had been developed over the previous year. We decided that a notebook or log should be kept only insofar as it had value for the particular participant, and not as something required for us. We placed no stress on display. By the middle of the second week, as people's involvement developed and they felt a need to keep track of that involvement and to be clear about its development, display began to develop, even very carefully, as participants asked each other questions about projects they had started.

Two experiences, terribly important for every-

one's growth and perceived so by the participants, were the experiences of organization and of closing. In the middle of the second week, and after our own perception that participants were using the material with very little awareness of any of the planning or preparation that we had put into this environment, we asked that each advisory take over the responsibility for thinking through what was needed in organizing an area, and for setting up among themselves the roster that would take responsibility for whatever organization they finally decided on. It was this experience that made the participants aware of organization. Indeed many of them reported that the setting of the first week *had* no organization!

The day before the Institute ended, we asked people to complete their work and be prepared to answer questions from others on the elements of their investigations. On the final day, once again each advisory took over an area and "closed" it. Many of the teachers had never had this experience of either organization or closure, and valued it.

On the negative side, the planning we did to involve the participants in the shaping of their own learning and in choice can stand criticism. While the experience of making choices is a necessary one and integral to understanding open education, it resulted in an undue amount of anxiety for participants. It seems to me we can achieve this desired element of choice with less free-floating unease. Participants would have been helped if we had given them a rough projection of the major outlines of the Institute plan. Around this they could have added options and could have allocated their time in a better way. Adding to the unease, the number of options in the third week was excessive. Some tended to be demonstrations rather than participations. The trips around Harlem, however, resulted in new starting points and in a tremendous enlargement of investigations.

Working with many small groups and encouraging them to draw what they needed for their investigations from the environment and then to set up their own area for experimentation, established a need for lots of small areas or small

rooms. We met this need, but I think an enormous amount of arranging and rearranging had to be done by office staff every day. However, the attempts to break down the rigid and large structures of the seminar in order to offer small group seminars were overdone, resulting in much repetition and too many small groups. A framework of two whole-group seminars a week, or six whole-group seminars during the three weeks, support by the advisories, and small group seminars would have given a basic framework of certain essential concerns relating to all.

Finally, I consider at odds with the relationships we were trying to set up the evaluation and grading that ended the Institute. It was clear from the participation of auditors (no credit attendance), and from the unstinted involvement of most of the participants, that the *experience* was treasured and felt to be necessary. The risk-taking we were urging is fostered in an accepting atmosphere, where grades are an intrusive and contradictory note. Self-evaluation by the participants of their own growth is a useful summing-up experience, but a *grading* evaluation should be discontinued and continuation of credits should be seriously questioned.

Notes on the continuum of change

Martha Norris
Nancy Schaffer
Geneva Dunbar

The following is taken from an advisor's report on work in progress (September to November 1971) at P.S. 75, where there are 14 classes in the Open Corridor program.

The beginning weeks were a striking contrast to last year's beginning. All of the "old" teachers were enthusiastic about their groups and morale was high. The principal has a clearer understanding of the importance of giving teachers time and latitude when they are involved in change. He has been, and continues to be, cooperative. Unlike last year, when many teachers at 3 p.m. felt close to exhaustion, this year at 3 p.m. there has been much excitement about their experiences or ideas about planning. More attention is being given to environment. Fabric or bright colored contact backing for displays, tablecloths of vivid colors, plants, fall flowers, upholstered furniture, and rugs are commonplace in most rooms. Areas are well-defined generally, although there are adjustments called for in furniture arrangement as needs change. Teachers' comments are shifting from self-consciousness to self-evaluation.

There are four teachers who are new to the program -- three bilingual and one third grade. In addition, our former corridor

teacher has a group (first grade) for the first time. The new teachers are moving very slowly, mainly because the bilingual people came to the program lacking a theoretical background or frame of reference.

The sense of community grows increasingly stronger. Examples of this with the children are:

1. *Purposeful visiting.* The bilingual children in the second grade have frequent exposure to the children and activities in the classroom and corridor. The children in a second grade class made a huge diagram of the human body. Two children took their drawing to another second grade to show it, explain it, and answer questions. It was impressive to observe how the visitors were received by the host class. The "host" teacher had the visitors stand on chairs to enable all to see. She "fielded" the questions and comments to the visitors, making it into a discussion led by them.

2. *Sharing in corridor assemblies.* The children in the bilingual first grade introduced a Spanish song at their corridor assembly. Children of a kindergarten class took the lead in teaching Halloween songs to other classes at their assembly.

3. *The use of both adults and other children as resources.* The children feel free to approach teachers and children in other classes to borrow materials.

4. *Helpful relationships.* In a first grade class, during a morning, an advisor observed:

--a child teach five others to finger weave;
--a boy who knows how to spell approached by at least four children to spell words for their writing;
--a girl teach a Spanish dominant friend the alphabet in a letter game.

--In a third grade class where the children are doing a study of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, an advisor observed a Spanish dominant child who reads and writes Spanish translate for other children and teach them how to write in Spanish.

In making a quick assessment of the degree of helpfulness that could be noted in ten minutes, an advisor observed six individual children helping others in a second grade class. A French dominant child, who spoke no English when he entered school in September, is assisted in following a group directive by other children and is able to "get by" on many occasions when he has provoked another child, because his behavior is accepted in general by the other children.

Examples of community between teachers are:

1. Teachers are willing to share responsibility in planning and taking charge of corridor assemblies. At the invitation of the kindergarten teachers, some assemblies have been held around the piano in their rooms.

2. Teachers carefully plan gym periods to include a teacher whose children might especially need gym time on a given day.

3. Several teachers extend themselves to new teachers -- offering suggestions, help, and materials. One of the "old" teachers has adopted a new teacher and calls her at night to suggest and reassure.

4. Teachers pair off to form a baby sitting service for parents to insure attendance at parents' meetings. (Each teacher met with her parents in her classroom.) This plan worked successfully and might be tried in other schools.

5. Teachers agree to take a child who is having a difficult day to relieve the teacher or to help the child.

6. Teachers who have found inexpensive or interesting materials spread the news to other teachers or purchase materials for them.

7. Teachers visit each other's classes during prep periods or ask each other for help when they're "stuck" in a curriculum area.

Examples of developing community between teachers, parents, and children are:

1. Parents accompany groups on trips.

2. A parent who plays the guitar has come in to sing with the children.

3. A father who is skilled in carpentry assisted a group in building a house.

4. A group of parents have purchased 10,000 Christmas cards to sell to raise funds for the program.

Examples of the advisors' relationship to the community are:

1. Parents have conferred with advisors about problems children have at home.

2. A parent asked an advisor for help in choosing material to read for a paper she is assigned to write.

3. The chairman of the Open Corridor parents' committee and an advisor are in biweekly contact at school and on the telephone.

4. Teachers who need special help phone the advisors at night.

Teachers who need a block of time to work through planning or an activity have met with the advisor evenings and on a Saturday afternoon.

6. All teachers attend meetings with the advisors.

Since the feeling of community is well grounded, the advisors' concentration in staff meetings has been focused on planning, record keeping, improving the quality of parent conferences, and sustaining curriculum themes that can be continually enlarged on and deepened. Record keeping is stressed frequently, yet there is need for vast improvement. Every teacher

("old") does have an individual folder containing samples of every child's work. Many record individual children's progress (or lack of it) in reading and math on a card or in a notebook. Instead of report cards, teachers prepared written reports to parents. Parents' responses have, thus far, been positive. All of the teachers agreed that having to write a report forced them to observe closely and think about every child. They are now ready to provide the evidence of children's learning -- a task they could not undertake when they were coping with their own fledgling self-confidence, when they were getting accustomed to working with small groups, or when they were working out a scheme of multiple activities.

We have talked together about setting a positive tone in parent conferences by narrowing discussions of a child's weaknesses to one specific point, instead of presenting parents with an onslaught of negatives. Necessary to this approach is being able to discern what is important for the parent to know *now* and what can *wait*. In making this decision, teachers need to know whether it is a problem peculiar to that child or whether the child's behavior is characteristic of a stage of development.

We have encouraged teachers to emphasize in their planning a broadening, or an extension, of experiences and activities that began or that they introduced during the first two months of school. The following examples give indication of spill-over from one activity to another, growing sustainment of involvement, and some of the factors that keep a child going while learning.

* A first grade teacher initiated a "buildings" project with her group. The "school" was the focal point. Small groups were taken out to look at the exterior of the school building. They observed that one side of the building is higher than the other; the "middle" of the building is a rectangular shape; the "top" of the building on one side comes to the top of the windows. On the front they saw three "floors" with nine windows on each "floor." They counted 27 windows total. They wrote down the name of the school.

The teacher provided shoe boxes of assorted sizes for model making, magic markers, paint,

and wax paper for windows. The children chose boxes of appropriate sizes and through matching and comparing made a model of reasonable accuracy, complete with 27 windows. The teacher then extended this to a look at the whole block. She had the children count the buildings across the street and the number of windows in each and then had them discuss decorations on the buildings. The advisor noted on a subsequent visit that the model of the school was on a high shelf and children were moving around it as if it didn't exist. When asked what happened, the teacher said, "Oh, they've lost interest, and I've lost interest."

The advisor suggested that it would be helpful to other teachers if this topic were discussed at the noon staff meeting. At the meeting, a "buildings" flow chart diagram was drawn on the blackboard. At first, the teachers suggested all of the possible areas of exploration that might be considered in language, science, math, art, and social studies. The teacher was then asked if she had thought about developing a project around the school itself. From this a discussion ensued about opportunities for measuring the corridors and their classroom, counting the rooms in the school, comparing the two sides of the interiors, finding out how the building is heated, where the water comes from, finding out about the lights, about the jobs people have in the school (how many different jobs there are), how these people get to the school, how the children get to the school, etc.

The advisor pointed out that the way children experience the block and the way the teachers experience the block are very different things. The children experience the block in terms of what there is in it that relates directly to them -- the school. It is too much of a demand to expect six-year olds to replicate other buildings in the block in as full, or "whole," a way. Too, perhaps interest dissipated because their "building" was not included as an important activity in the scheme of activities in the classroom. If the project is to be continually developed, it must be placed strategically where children can see it and respond to it; books about buildings would be near it; needed materials for

additions would be within easy reach; and the teacher must assess with the children periodically what has been done and what could be added. Trips outside and inside would be planned around looking at particular aspects of it.

The teacher felt that these recommendations were helpful and her interest in the project was renewed. She gave some thought to how she might spark the children's interest again. She realized that she had offered only shoe boxes for model making which was in itself limiting the possibilities for variation in design. She brought in corrugated boxes, styrofoam, and meat trays and placed these in an attractive display. Then she talked with the children about *all* of the different kinds of buildings they could make. Out of this discussion, a list of "Buildings We Can Make" was written and posted. Now, individual children are making a haunted house, a church, an apartment building, and houses. Small groups are building a huge supermarket. In addition, the children are doing a study of the school.

* A project of growing sustained involvement and an integration of all academic areas is the "house" in a class of combined six-and seven-year-olds. This project began at the end of the second week of school and continues to grow in depth. An essential point to mention is that half this group are in the Open Corridor program for the third year (15 second graders) and most of these were with their present teacher last year. Last year, the teacher had worked extensively with houses, using shoe boxes. She wanted to utilize the house theme again but to find a new approach. A friend of hers was building a doll house and the idea intrigued her. Her suggestion to build a doll house was accepted enthusiastically by her class.

First, she put a large piece of plywood (3' x 4') down for a base with a number of smaller pieces by it. The children arranged pieces and tried out arrangements for two days. Then, she took the class to the Museum of the City of New York to see the doll houses. They returned very eager to start their house.

They measured the size of their boards and went on trips to the lumber yard and the supermarket for wood and wooden boxes. A father brought in hammers and nails and helped the children to begin carpentry. They built a two-story house and covered the flat roof with bottle caps. They estimated the number of caps needed for each row and kept count of the number they used. They brought mussel shells back from their trip to the beach and made a shell path around the house. The shells were too large -- making the path too wide -- so they brought in black beans and made the path anew. They also brought in wall paper, pieces of carpet, fabric, and doll furniture from home. They papered the walls, carpeted the floors, tiled the bathroom floor, and covered one wall in the kitchen with a piece of cork. This work provided a rich source of *measuring* experiences.

They have made clay furniture, dishes, and food, and cardboard furniture. They have made people of wooden spools and clothed them with pieces of felt and fabric measured to fit. These activities required a good deal of thinking and organizing in terms of furnishing each room suitably and ensuring that the people and furniture fit into the rooms. A patio is a part of the design; therefore, there was much discussion about what would be appropriate for outdoors.

At the end of the third week, the electrician was drilling down the hall. The teacher and a few children invited him in to drill holes at the corners of windows that had been drawn on the walls. He gave them a hole at each of the four corners of each window. Using key saws, the boys were able to saw the windows out. Shutters to fit the windows were made of burlap.

A short trip to see junk sculpture in a museum and a Steuben Glass sculpture exhibit aroused the children's interest in making sculpture for their house. One of the children noticed a bird coop on the roof of a house in a book she was reading and called this to the attention of her teacher and friends. Wire and wood were provided. The children built two bird coops for their roof and made birds out of clay. A father of one of the Spanish children is the superintendent of a building. He enthusiastically accepted a request to take the children up to the roof of his building.

The teacher has developed a "growing book" with the children which is an account of all their experiences along the way. This is a sequential story displayed on a wall chart. Photographs of different children working on the house were mounted on plain paper to allow space for explanatory statements. The children who were photographed wrote about their work.

New plans are in progress. Equipment will be made for a backyard. A car and a garage will be built. The science teacher has been asked to assist the children in wiring the house. The children will explain their work on the house and show their house at the corridor assembly. Small groups from other classes will visit to see and hear about it.

Throughout the duration of this project, the teacher has continually refocused the children's thinking about their work, offered new materials (plastic, interesting fabric, textured paper), raised casual and unimposing questions (casual in tone, but not in intent), and maintained a high level of enthusiasm, herself, about the children's fine efforts. The process was teacher-child initiative intertwined.

* In a third grade class, the children began the year with a study of how they are alike and unlike their parents. They traced traits like eye color, hair color, etc. From this, they went into family origins. Several of the children's families come from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic; thus these two places have become a starting point for a study of Spanish culture. The children have done research in the school library on government, industrial products, history, and agriculture. They have traced maps and unusual book covers. An advisor suggested that they visit the Spanish market. A Spanish mother (from the class) accompanied the group on their trip and explained the uses of different fruits and vegetables. The mother came back to the classroom and taught the children how to cook the food. Since all the food (raw fruit included) was shared with all the children, several children had experiences in division, addition, multiplication, and subtraction. A child who has difficulty with counting made a circle on paper representing each child in

in the class and cut bananas, piece by piece, to match the circles. A large piece of sugar cane was purchased, and its full length, sections and circumference were measured in a variety of ways.

The children are learning the seasons, months, days, and numbers in Spanish. They are eager to speak Spanish in the classroom. The Spanish-speaking children are instructing the English-speaking children.

There is an area in the room that has been designated for the development of this project. In the area, there is a "Translation Table" where the Spanish children translate for the others. There are a number of beautiful charts posted and beautiful books (in Spanish) displayed. Spanish children have brought in clay pots, a mantilla, and dolls to share.

They have also written autobiographical stories about themselves. There is a special coin chart noting the rate of exchange for American coins. All of these things are arranged against a beautiful backdrop of black and white prints.

An advisor suggested that they learn more Spanish songs, and they should write to the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico Consulate and the airlines for more information. A Puerto Rican student teacher in the bilingual kindergarten brought pictures of the landscape and buildings in Puerto Rico to show. Her husband has a slide collection which he will lend to the class.

The teacher of this class is pleased with the success of this project. This is her first venture in sustaining a theme for a prolonged period. The most significant outcome of this activity is the good feeling that its prominence has engendered in the Spanish children. Every day, the Spanish child who speaks halting English grows more confident, and the other Spanish children are making contributions that are valued by all.

There are student teachers and paraprofessionals in most of the classrooms. Most classes have registers of 30 or more; therefore,

two or three adults in a classroom do not in any way limit the interaction between the children. It is common to see several small groups functioning independently while the adults are working with individual children or a small group. All of the adults are adept at stepping out of situations once they have gotten a group started. The advisors are helping them to work with individual children or small groups *long* enough to provide the kind of help children need from an adult and to make an assessment of what could be possible for these children -- or just to provide stability of contact for children who need only that.

As expected, some teachers are able to lead discussions that are rich in content and interesting. Others have not yet made a complete break from the "show and tell" tradition, which has limited appeal to the group. In staff meetings, the advisors have encouraged teachers to observe discussions in the kindergarten groups. Both kindergarten teachers are skilled in developing a topic with their children.

Realizing that the style of the teacher is a critical factor in determining the quality of the social atmosphere in the classroom, our efforts have been directed toward helping three teachers improve their style. Each is aware that she is intense in her approach to children and is interested in improving the climate of her classroom. Specific suggestions have been made: "Try to avoid having a moral discussion about every infraction." "When you feel tension building inside, leave the classroom for a minute and regain your composure." "Make an effort to slow your pace in moving around the room," etc. These suggestions have been accepted in good faith, and these teachers are more conscious of their specific problems now. In all "old" classrooms, the atmosphere is serene more often than not.

We can now see objectively the effect of the Open Corridor experience on these children who are beginning their third year....

More on reading tests

Third grade teachers give their views. The discussion was taped by their advisor.

J: I gave tests last year in second grade and I found that they were very disruptive to children. The children who were having a hard time reading and who were just beginning to develop some confidence in being able to do things (because I was giving them things on their level) were suddenly confronted with and overwhelmed by so much work they could *not* do that they became very upset. It took a week afterwards to calm everybody down and get back to where we were beforehand.

S: First of all, the length of the test is absolutely ridiculous. Second of all, no matter how much you say to the children (and I say it the day before, that morning, I say it two days before) that it is not a test, that this is something everybody has to take because you *have* to take it, and I go on and on and on -- no matter how much you try to convince the children, they get tremendously upset and immediately they look at the booklet and they say, "But it says 'test.' And every booklet *is* titled "test."

Now we also gave children this third-grade diagnostic test, which I feel is even more damaging than the MAT. The point of the diagnostic test supposedly is to tell us in what areas the kids need help. It is completely invalid, unless you can give these tests on a one-to-one or possibly two-to-one or three-to-one situation. But if you're giving it in a whole class situation, it is totally invalid. You are not getting anywhere in terms of finding out where the kids are. And then to go back to what J said,

my kids were angry at me for two weeks after the tests were finished. It completely threw them off and I couldn't get them back on the track for two weeks.

Advisor: Could you give us some specifics as to why you feel it is invalid?

S: There's a tremendous amount of reading on the tests. Tremendous! So those children who don't have any problem in reading (whom you really don't have to diagnose because they can attack all of the words and they have all the skills) *know* all the words, it doesn't bother them. The children who have the problems -- in phonetics, in putting words together, etc. -- after one sentence, they have had it! They say, "I cannot do it, I am not going to do it."

There's too much to do. For example, they gave 25 or 30 words for initial consonants, when 5 or 7 or even 10 would have been sufficient. And for vocabulary enrichment, there were 30 words; 10 would have been enough.

G: The first 20 were, "Which sounds are alike at the beginning?" Then the next 20 were, "Can you find where the sounds are alike, beginning, middle, or end?" And then, another one, "Is it the beginning *or* the end where the sounds are alike?" Very tricky.

And there was at least one I noticed where the words seemed to have the same sound at *both* the middle and the end!

S: The pictures that are on the test are totally inadequate. Out of about 25 pictures, where children had to look at the pictures and find initial or final consonants, if *they* knew or *I* knew *half* of them, it would have been been a lot!

L: This is a bad thing to impose on children. It's too lengthy for one thing. You don't have to give kids so many questions to find out how much they know. And what's the purpose of it? It's a torture chamber. And personally, I think that this is an expression of hostility against children. What are we accomplishing here? And if it isn't hostility, then the people who make up this test don't know children. You know, I was afraid to believe

it because even an adult would have trouble with it.

J: I think that L has mentioned something that is very much to the point -- the tests are a very hostile thing to do to children. What are we really in school for and what are our purposes in teaching children? It is certainly not to put them through a grueling experience, where all they experience is failure. School becomes asscciated with the experience of failure. It's inevitable that you are not going to know parts of it.

L: And no matter how much you say to the children, "Look, children, this is not for grades, don't worry," they get to the point where they don't know. You can just feel the vibrations.

S: Yes, I stood there and said, "I do not expect you to know everything." But it's in the nature of children to *want* to know.

L: It's a terrible thing to do to children, One child said to me, "You know, Mrs. L., I don't know this." I said, "Yes, dear, I know. Don't worry about it. Just do what you know."

G: I'd like to know this. We took the test about three or four weeks ago. How are we supposed to diagnose and prescribe if we haven't gotten the results back yet? While you're waiting for them to send back the results, are you to wait to teach reading? Obviously not. You use your own diagnosis and proceed to teach anyway.

Advisor: Do you have any feeling that this diagnostic test will indicate anything which you yourself did not pick up by your own informal diagnostic methods?

L: No, absolutely not. We can find out by much simpler methods.

S: Everyone is familiar with the phonics inventory sheet (I'm sure it's in every school). And if you give that to kids, one-to-one, or even as I did, three-to-one, you get valid results.

G: You can find out how much a child knows

even without the phonics inventory, just by observing, talking, and reading with him for a few days. I think you know exactly what he knows and what he doesn't know, if you relate to him on an individual basis.

L: Can any test that is not prepared within the immediate environment be valid? We should make up our own tests...then they would really be pertinent and tell us what we need to know.

George Verchik, a recent graduate, who assisted in administering reading tests, comments on what he feels is "educated and considered unfairness."

Two third-grade classes are brought together to take the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. The Test is designed to be administered in four sittings. It is being administered in three sittings....The two classes add up to forty plus children. They crowd the room and make it necessary to bring in more chairs and desks....The windows are open to a busy street, and all the intrusions that sound can make on thought and concentration flow into the room....The scene is set. We are asking children, young children, to sit longer than usual, to concentrate for an extended period and listen attentively or their scores will be affected. All this takes place in a relatively innovative school....

Auditory discrimination. The children are told this section will test "how well you hear sounds in words." *B*eginning, *M*iddle and *E*nd sounds. Several children asked, "What if there are two sounds we hear? Should we mark our papers *B* and *E* if that is where we hear the two sounds?" The children had been told that this probably wouldn't happen. The fact of the matter is that it did happen, and looking at the Test as a whole, it is suprising that the children were not confused more frequently. "Squirrel-Squeal", "Attitude-Magnitude" are just two examples. The Test is constructed by experts, by a tribunal from on high, with credentials two feet long and beyond reproach! The company selling the Test has been doing this from the year one,

and the Board of Education is responsible for the purchase.

Syllabication. This is usually not taught until the end of third grade or the beginning of the fourth. To teach the rules of syllabication within a day or two and then ask children who have just left the second grade to perform on a test is manifestly unfair. What happens to a child if in pronouncing a word he partitions it naturally but incorrectly, as several children did on the example given in the directions with the word *"over, ov-er."* How about the boy who doesn't break *"bottle"* between the "t's", or the child who labors over his reading and confuses phonics with syllabication?

Beginning, End Sounds Representation. The children were to do this section themselves. It was accompanied by handsome illustrations, each less than an inch square in size. Children had difficulty with "eagle." They knew bird, but they had to select the proper beginning for a particular bird. Another illustrated item might have been a bee, a hornet, or a mosquito, but the correct answer was "insect." Still another item, which one boy identified as the root of a tree, could have very easily been that. Asked to examine it more closely he determined it might be the foot of a bird. Now that was a correct answer but an end sound was hard to figure out. The Test called for the end sound of the word "claw" or you were counted out.

One child said after the session, "It should be illegal to test you on what you don't know." Being tested on something that has not been taught may be of some value, and a case could probably be made for that view. For my part, if there is to be some concern for the child, what does this example of a test do for a child every time he hears the word "test?"

What does it do to the relationship between child and teacher -- a teacher who wants and needs a child's confidence and a child who wants to bestow it? A child who wants to find the teacher a supportive, dependable adult may decide that when the word "test" appears he is going to be cheated. What happens between the teacher and an administration which creates these conditions? Nobody can trust anybody!

Reviews

"THE HAVING OF WONDERFUL IDEAS," by Eleanor Duckworth. Harvard Educational Review, May 1972. Pages 217-231.

A student of Piaget (and his translator when he lectures in North America), Eleanor Duckworth describes in a few telling case studies how she came to use her knowledge of his theory when teaching science to seven-year-olds in a special program in Africa. Her experiences there enhanced her sensitivity to the intellectual difficulties encountered by children, so that she was enabled to develop the ability to raise the right questions at the right time -- or at least to create the kind of setting in which children themselves could do so. The author is convinced that intellectual development is "a matter of having wonderful ideas" and that such creative activities depend to "an overwhelming extent on the occasions for having them." This is where the teacher and the school can play a role -- providing the material, as well as opportunities to work with the material, and allowing the child not only to accept his own ideas flowing from his experience but to work them through. In this way, by encouraging the expansion of a child's "repertories of actions...on ordinary things," rather than typically dismissing his ideas as "only silly and evil," the school can perform the crucial function of supplying the intellectual content without which, in Duckworth's view, intelligence cannot grow.

OPEN EDUCATION: A Sourcebook for Parents and Teachers, edited by Ewald B. Nyquist and Gene R. Hawes. Bantam Books, 1972. 400 pages. $1.95.

This paperback is crammed with first-rate pieces that set a new standard for books of readings in education. Editors Nyquist and Hawes (the first, New York State's

Commissioner of Education, and the second, the author of *Educational Testing for Millions)* have done a superb and scrupulous job of sifting the wheat from the chaff in old and new writings on open education. Their collection pulls together key thinkers and planners (Weber, Perrone, Yeomans), successful practitioners (Rasmussen, Welch, Sargent), evaluators like Chittenden and Bussis, philosophers like Dewey, Piaget, and Isaacs, and finally, the journalists who play a pivotal role in dissemination -- Silberman, Featherstone, the Grosses. True to the spirit of their subject, the editors have furnished us with lively and serious material that challenges our thought and action. The design of the book is also to be commended for its usefulness and attractiveness, despite the small print employed. In fact, for the sake of the many readers who will refer to this book over and over again, we would strongly suggest a reversal of usual publishing procedure: a reissue of this volume in hardcover and with a larger size typeface.

PUPIL PROGRESS: Record-keeping. The State Education Department, 1972. 43 pages. Reviewed by Geneva Dunbar.

This pamphlet presents an excellent overview of a variety of child-centered programs throughout New York State and their methods of record keeping and reporting to parents. It expresses the concern of teachers, administrators, and parents that an individualized program requires a more individualized system of recording a child's progress and problems: "In diagnosing children's strengths and weaknesses; in assessing children's individual progress; in keeping track of where each child is, where he has been, and where he might be going; in communicating with parents; in planning with the child; *there is no substitute for records."* In addition to ideas on recording information about children in grades K-6, the booklet includes illustrations of suggested charts and checklists.

Samples are given on organizing the day for

all grade levels through the use of teacher-made charts. The best method for recording social development is through anecdotal records, and a number of detailed, actual accounts are supplied. In the area of academic growth, many examples are noted of various types of record keeping forms for the basic skills. The pamphlet also emphasizes the importance of keeping parents informed. It provides copies of the forms this reporting may take.

The ideas and suggestions set forth are not meant to be "models." They are meant as guides for teachers and administrators who are looking for alternatives in methods of recording pupil progress that will best meet the needs of the children and school community they serve.

This publication may be acquired without cost by writing to: The University of the State of New York, The State Education Department, Bureau of Elementary Curriculum Development, Albany, New York.

YELLOW PAGES OF LEARNING RESOURCES, edited by Richard Saul Wurman. The MIT Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. 02142. 94 pages. $1.95.

This is an ingenious compilation of the people, places, and processes that are available as firsthand sources of learning for teachers, students, and parents in any city, large or small. In its handsome design, this book copies the familiar telephone directory. Its purpose, however, is not to sell products but to guide readers to using the resources of city life that are ready-at-hand supplements to, and that stimulate classroom learning.

From "Accountants" to "Zoo", this directory covers some 70 of the major occupations, institutions, and functions typical of present-day urban environments. Each category is organized to highlight not only its inherent learning possibilities, but questions that encourage the reader to enlarge and extend the classifications presented.

Workshop schedule

November

6 M *Meet Lillian Weber 4-6*
7 T Closed -- Election Day
8 W Math Workshop 4:30-7:30
9 Th Chat: Problems in Beginning 4-5
Record Keeping 5-6
Photography 4-6 (Limit 10)
"Printing without a Darkroom"
13 M Science with Simple Materials 4-6
14 T Repeat of November 6 Program
15 W Music and Movement 4:30-7:30
16 Th Record Keeping 4-5
Chat: Problems in Beginning 5-6
Photography 4-6 Repeat of November 9
18 S *Language Workshop with Vera John 10-2*
Dr. John, formerly of Yeshiva University, is a nationally known linguist.
20 M Language Workshop for Beginning Teachers; Clay 4-6
21 T Repeat of November 8 Program
22 W Closed
23 Th Closed Thanksgiving
27 M What Can We Learn From Cooking? 4-6
28 T Special Requests 4-7
29 W Drawing 4-6
30 Th Japanese Cooking 4-6
Photography (continued) 4-6

December

2 S *Math Workshop with Victor Wagner 10-2*
Mr. Wagner teaches at Little Red Schoolhouse
9 S *Science Workshop with Philip White 10-2*
Dr. White is a professor of science education at Queens College.

Workshops on Math and Science
Series I: January 6, 20, February 3
Series II: January 13, 27, February 10

Registration. Each workshop has places for 50 people on a first come, first served basis. Preference will be given to people who sign up at the Workshop Center. To register by phone, call Deborah Lieb, (212) 368-1619-1620.

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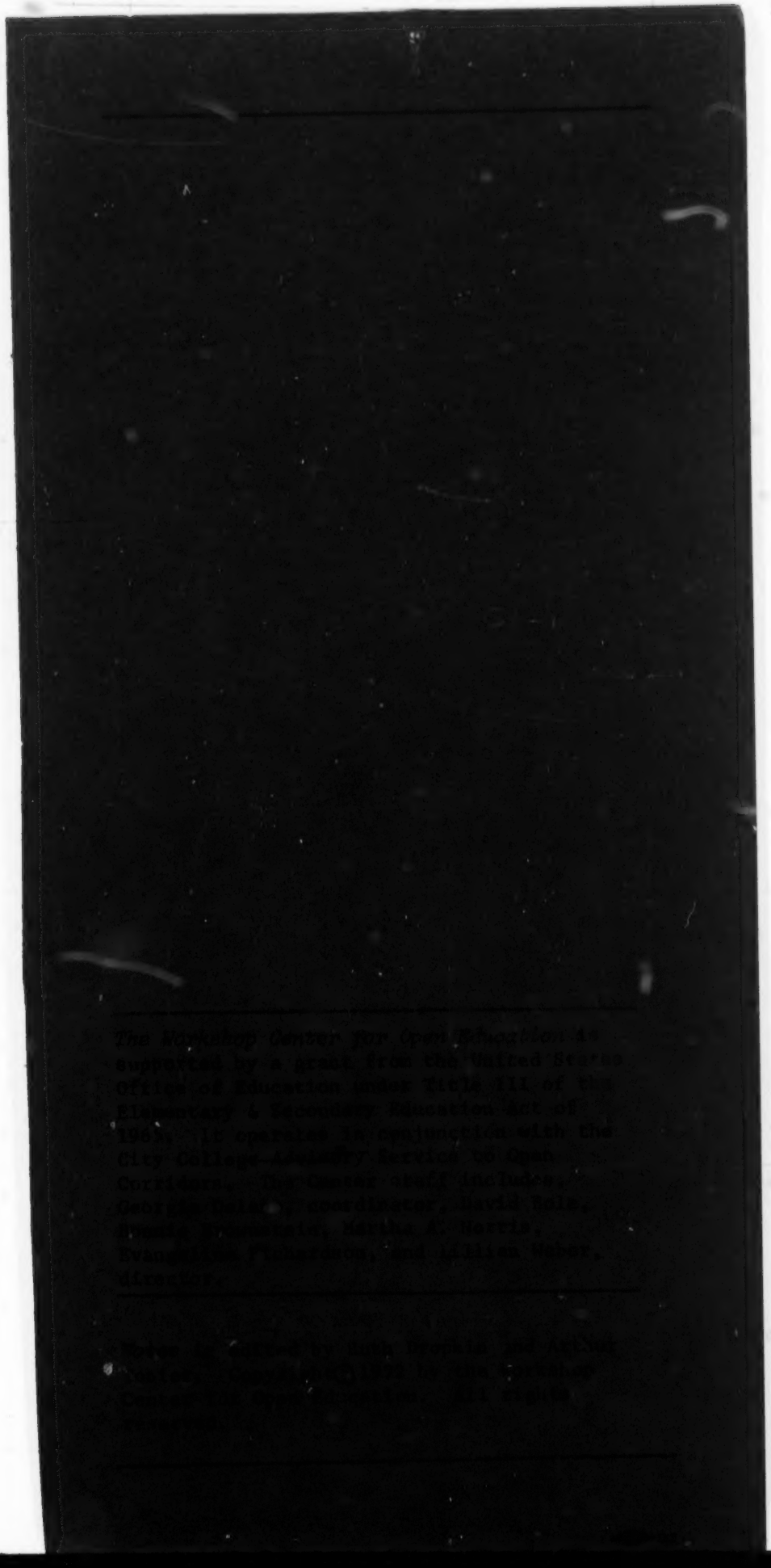

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